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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MONROVIA 000623

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [LI](#)  
SUBJECT: LIBERIA: TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION MOVES  
FORWARD SLOWLY

REF: A. 06 MONROVIA 1294

[1](#)B. 06 MONROVIA 1146

[1](#)C. MONROVIA 294

[1](#)D. MONROVIA 1637

Classified By: Political Officer Silvia Eiriz for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Over the past two months, the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has been working with the international community to put policies and practices in place that will instill donor confidence and permit resumption of funding of the TRC's activities. Many strides have been made towards instituting policies and creating a comprehensive work plan and budget, but the TRC still suffers from management problems and personality conflicts that are proving difficult to resolve. The Chairman of the TRC told Poloff that he would quit the Commission if he could. Some other commissioners are not cooperative with international community efforts to assist or advise the TRC. Commissioners continue to make public statements accusing the international community of failing to support the Commission while refusing to acknowledge their own shortcomings. An European Commission (EC) technical advisor seconded to the TRC to assist with management issues is often marginalized by Commissioners and they have not fully accepted recommendations included in a lengthy report she prepared on the Commission. The TRC Chairman stalled the commencement of mutually agreed upon financial audit, creating some bureaucratic reasons for holding up the work. Notwithstanding problematic Commissioners, the TRC secretariat, headed by a recently arrived Executive Secretary

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and a competent and dedicated Program Manager, pushes forward with a work plan and budget. The new budget of approximately 5 million USD for 18 months is much more realistic than the original projected amount of 12 million USD for a two year project. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (D/SRSG) Jordan Ryan, instructed the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to fund the 2-month emergency budget with the assistance of the Open Society Institute for West Africa (OSIWA). Embassy is deciding on a disbursement mechanism for USAID funds available for use by the TRC. Benetech, contracted by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), is assisting the TRC with database management and coding human rights incidents. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In February 2007, the international community through the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) recommended that the TRC engage with the ICGL in a combined working group, with the ICGL serving in an advisory capacity. The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and TRC jointly chair the

working group and ECOWAS acts as the secretariat. Working group meetings started in March and have been taking place once a week since then. The working group has formed several sub-committees to address specific issues. The first sub-committee reviewed the TRC's rules and procedures, making a recommendation to the Commissioners on changes that should be made. The second sub-committee on programs and budget continues to meet to discuss elements of the emergency plan as well as larger issues of a comprehensive 18 month work plan and budget that can be presented to donors. A third sub-committee was formed to address issues of staffing and salaries.

13. (C) Not all Commissioners are in favor of change. Through working group meetings it has become clear that some of the Commissioners are unwilling to address problems of overstaffing or other mismanagement of financial or human resources. Commissioners continue to insist that they each need a personal secretary and personal security officers. They were initially resistant to pooling their vehicles, but have now agreed on a modified vehicle pooling policy. (FYI. The TRC only has 10 vehicles, but 9 are assigned to Commissioners, leaving one for general use. End FYI.) Commissioners refuse to make cuts in their own salaries, but are willing to cut staff salaries to address budgetary realities. The GOL provides funds for salaries for TRC staff and Commissioners. Commissioners earn approximately 3,200 USD per month after taxes. The TRC Chairman claims that Commissioners do not receive any other benefits in the form of fuel allowances or vehicle maintenance costs. (FYI. If the proposed national budget is passed by the legislature, the average civil servant will earn 50 USD per month. End FYI.) The Commissioners cite both the TRC Act and other regional commissions when justifying salary expenditures. The Act states that Commissioners should be paid at the level of Supreme Court Justices. (FYI. Commissioners on the Sierra Leone Truth Commission were paid 8,000 USD per month. END

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FYI.)

14. (C) While Commissioners appear resistant to outside intervention, the newly hired Executive Secretary of the TRC secretariat, Nathaniel Kwabo and the Program Director, Steven

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Manly are reaching out to the international community for assistance. They have requested more training programs for staff from UNMIL and the Glen Cree Center for Peace and Reconciliation. They have requested and received assistance from the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) on devising policies guidelines, a work plan, and a budget. They are discussing security issues with UNMIL and the Ministry of Justice. Manly is putting together a comprehensive work plan and budget that will be presented to the TRC-ICGL working group for comment. (FYI. Both Kwabo and Manly are Liberians returned from the diaspora. Kwabo is the former director of the Liberia Democracy Watch, the same organization that current TRC Chairman Jerome Verdier was heading before becoming a Commissioner. Kwabo is reportedly quite close to Verdier even though he was chosen, according to Verdier, through a transparent process. END FYI.)

15. (C) The working group agreed on a financial audit to account for money spent to date and to help the TRC improve accountability. The USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) agreed to fund a financial audit through a Ghanaian firm chosen by Liberia OTI partner Development Alternatives, Inc (DAI). OTI/DAI informed the TRC one week in advance of the auditors' arrival and provided the TRC with the final version of the scope of work. When the auditors arrived on May 21, they were only given a small room to work in and were instructed by the TRC Chairman (through the Executive Secretary) not to start any work until the Commission

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received a letter of engagement from the auditing firm. The Executive Secretary claimed not to have a copy of the scope of work and said that there was some concern that the auditors were not Liberians and that the Commission was not consulted when choosing the auditing firm. On May 23, DAI country director informed the Executive Secretary that if the auditors did not begin work that day, they would depart the country that afternoon. The auditors were subsequently allowed to commence a financial review of the TRC. A management review of the Commission has also been suggested, but Commissioners believe it would duplicate the work of the EC in-house technical advisor (even though they have not accepted the results of the EC technical advisor's 45-page report on management practices and other policies). The Ambassador has suggested that OTI consider funding a management audit when the EC technical advisor finishes her assignment to verify if improvements have been made.

16. (C) Comment. The Commissioners continue to play the same games that have stalled the process to date. The TRC was given ample opportunity to comment on the scope of work and request input into the selection process. They were also informed in advance that the auditors were arriving and could have requested a letter of engagement earlier. Without a financial audit, it will be difficult for the Commission to continue soliciting international support. Despite Commissioners' resistance to changes or oversight, the Commission, with the assistance of the working group, has made strides towards recommencing its activities. UNDP and OSIWA will fund a 2-month emergency plan to reinvigorate the process through a massive public awareness campaign. The Program Director and his staff are well on the way to a formalized, comprehensive, and reasonable work plan and budget which encompasses all TRC activities until September 2008 and which will encourage more donor funding. The French government recently gave UNDP USD 250,000 for women's participation in the TRC. If remaining USG assistance is disbursed, total support to the TRC will be close to 1 million USD by the end of the process. End Comment.  
Mazel